

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 IO-13 JUSE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5992
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BUREAU OF CUSTOMS

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FOR S/NM: CUSTOMS FOR INTERNATIONAL DIVISION

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SNAR, PN
SUBJECT: DRUG DETECTION DOG TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PANAMA

1. ACTION REQUESTED: S/NM IS REQUESTED TO APPROVE
FUNDING FOR AN INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROJECT FOR TWO
DRUG DETECTOR DOGS AND TWO HANDLERS FROM THE NARCOTICS
SECTION OF PANAMANIAN CUSTOMS. THE ESTIMATED COST OF
THE PROJECT IS \$21,500.

2. JUSTIFICATION:

A. PARTICIPANTS IN THE NOVEMBER ARA REGIONAL NARCOTICS
CONFERENCE IN MIAMI LEARNED OF THE ALARMINGLY HIGH LEVELS
OF COCAINE AND OTHER NARCOTICS ENTERING THE U.S. THROUGH
FLORIDA FOR LOCAL CONSUMPTION AND FOR TRANSSHIPMENT TO
OTHER AREAS OF THE COUNTRY. IT WAS REPORTED THAT IN THE
PAST FISCAL YEAR SOME 500 POUNDS OF COCAINE HAD BEEN
INTERDICTED BY A FORCE OF OVER 200 U.S. CUSTOMS AND DRUG
ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION AGENTS STATIONED IN FLORIDA.
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B. DURING A COMPARABLE PERIOD PANAMANIAN TREASURY
NARCOTICS AGENTS ATTACHED TO THE CUSTOMS DIVISION AT
TOCUMENT INTERNATIONLA AIRPORT SEIZED MORE THAN 250 POUNDS
OF COCAINE EN ROUTE TO THE U.S. FROM SOURCE COUNTRIES.
THIS FORCE, WHICH NUMBERS LESS THAN 10 MEN, IS ANXIOUS
TO INTENSIFY ITS DRUG INTERDICTION EFFORTS BUT DUE TO

THE LACK OF MANPOWER, TECHNICAL MEANS AND TIME THEY ARE UNABLE TO COPE ADEQUATELY WITH THE HEAVY TOURIST TRAFFICE AND INTENSE BAGGAGE MOVEMENT. IT IS BELIEVED THAT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, SUCH AS DRUG DETECTOR DOGS, WOULD RESULT IN SUBSTANTIALLY MORE DRUG SEIZURES.

C. A NEW INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AT TOCUMEN IS NEARING COMPLETION AND IS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN OPERATIONS DURING THE FIRST HALF OF 1978. TOCUMEN IN A TRANSPORTATION HUB SERVICINING MANY INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES WHICH CARRY PASSENGERS AND FREIGHT TO SEVERAL U.S. PORTS OF ENTRY. THE NEW AIRPORT WILL HAVE BAGGAGE HANDLING FACILITIES SUITABLE FOR EMPLOYMENT OF DRUG DETECTOR DOGS AND HANDLERS. THEY WOULD WORK ALONG CONVEYOR BELTS AND IN AREAS HIDDEN FROM PUBLIC VIEW. IN THE EVENT THAT A DOG WOULD DETECT A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE IN A PARTICULAR PIECE OF LUGGAGE, INVESTIGATORS WOULD ALLOW THE SUITCASE TO CONTINUE TO THE BAGGAGE ROOM WHERE THE OWNER WOULD CLAIM IT. THE OWNER WOULD THEN BE REMOVED DISCRETELY TO THE NARCOTICS OFFICE WHERE THE LUGGAGE WOULD BE INSPECTED THOROUGH AND THE SUSPECT SEARCHED.

D. A DRUG DETECTOR DOG PROGRAM AT TOCUMEN AIRPORT HAS BEEN DISCUSSED INFORMALLY WITH LT. COL. MANUEL NORIEGA, CHIEF OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND PRINCIPAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER OF THE PANAMANIAN NATIONAL GUARD. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HE CONCURS WITH THE CONCEPT AND, IN COORDINATION WITH PANAMANIAN AND CANAL ZONE CUSTOMS AS WELL AS WITH THE U.S. ARMY PROVOST MARSHAL, AUTHORIZED A PILOT PROJECT AT THE OLD AIRPORT USING U.S. ARMY TRAINED DOGS. THE PURPOSE OF THE SUCCESSFUL PILOT PROJECT WAS TO ANALYZE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND TO SEEK SOLUTIONS PRIOR TO THE POSSIBLE SETTING UP OF A PROGRAM AT THE NEW AIRPORT.

E. THE EMBASSY'S NARCOTICS CONTROL COMMITTEE CONSIDERED THE PROPOSAL AT ITS NOVEMBER MEETING AND APPROVED IT, IN PRINCIPLE, PENDING THE DETERMINATION OF THE COSTS AND THE AVAILABILITY OF TRAINING IN THE U.S.

3. ESTIMATED COSTS: DEA HEADQUARTERS HAS ADVISED THE EMBASSY THAT U.S. CUSTOMS IS WILLING TO PROVIDE TRAINING FOR DOGS AND DOG HANDLERS PROVIDED A SPECIAL TRAINING SESSION CAN BE CONDUCTED I THE EARLY PART OF 1978. THE FOLLOWING COSTS WERE PROVIDED:

A. COST OF TRAINING (INCLUDING PURCHASE PRICE)
\$3-5000 PER DOG \$10,000

B. PER DIEM FOR TWO HANDLERS FOR 14 WEEKS

AT \$50 PER DAY \$9,900

C. INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL FOR HANDLERS \$1,100

D. SHIPMENT OF DOGS 150

E. CONTINGENCIES 450

TOTAL \$21,500

4. DESPITE RECENT UNFAVORABLE PUBLICITY DURING THE
SENATE DEBATE OF THE NEW PANAMA CANAL TREATIES REGARDING
ALLEGED NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING BY PANAMANIAN AUTHORITIES,
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THE RECORD OF COOPERATION BETWEEN U.S. AND PANAMANIAN
LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES HAS BEEN EXCELLENT. THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF A DRUG DETECTOR DOG PROGRAM AT THE NEW
AIRPORT WILL NOT ONLY RESULT IN A MORE EFFECTIVE
INTERDICTION OF DRUGS TRANSITING PANAMA EN ROUTE TO THE
U.S. BUT ALSO ENCOURAGE FURTHER COOPERATION IN OTHER
ASPECTS OF OUR NARCOTICS CONTROL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT
PROGRAMS.

5. IN VIEW OF U.S. CUSTOMS TRAINING SCHEDULE CONSTRAINTS
AND THE APPROACHING INAUGURATION OF THE NEW TOCUMEN
AIRPORT, THE DEPARTMENT'S EARLY AND FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION
OF THE ABOVE PROPOSAL IS STRONGLY URGED.
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